

“SERVANT” CHRISTMAS EVE / SENT (ADVENT 2017)

Many companies today understand that people want to have a greater sense of purpose – than just working a job. They want – we want to be a part of something bigger, we want to make a difference in our community, our world. To that end - paid time off to volunteer – to serve - is an increasingly common perk among employers. I read an article about 8 Forbes 500 companies that have distinguished themselves as the best at doing this. These are the top 2 I read about.

Novo Nordisk- Danish Diabetes Drug Co. gives 10 days a year to serve community. Must as a team, must be an ongoing project.

Nu Star- Tx based Petro Co gives 7.5 days & has started 2 ongoing non-profits that employees help run – homeless, boys home

Some Co. started because they wanted to help people: Tom's Shoes; Warby Parker (glasses); Gr Goods (C Chupp)

Other Co. started solely to help people: Brace for Impact46 – K McClellan – 300 orphans, holistic -job, school.

Kids Against Hunger – D Vincent – Pack high protein meals for partner churches primarily in Haiti to help serve the most needy in their community. You can help pack meals, even go on trips. Look up KAH or call our office.

LIFT Disability (J Pennington) faith based org. that helps families & indivs facing disability discover a new way to approach life.

Serving is a crazy thing – the way it impacts our soul at times – is so profound. I met a couple this week. They needed some help, to be served – and really what happened is I ended up being served as much by them as I tried to serve them.

Something in our soul is moved when we see people helping, serving others – or when we get served by another.

Maybe this is what makes Christmas – that is the real story of Christmas – so moving to us.

ISAIAH 49:6 (ESV) he says: “It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.” 800 years ago - God told us the real story of Christmas - why He SENT His son - Jesus. **God came to serve us. He came to be LIGHT to all (nations) in the darkness and brokenness of this world.**

God came, not just to give direction or be an exam, but to rescue us in our darkness - our brokenness, w his life.

God came to serve us: Absurd! To rescue us. Crazy! With His Life! Stunning! This is the real story of Christmas!

JOHN 17:18 (ESV) As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them... **And now, God sends us w Christ – to serve w Christ in this world.** Those that are Christ followers - He sends to serve others so they can know The Servant - Jesus.

During the whole of Advent – we have been talking about this idea of “SENT”. Today – on the eve of the day we celebrate Christ's arrival – his coming in flesh to serve us. May we truly grasp why God has called us to serve with Him.

As we serve – others encounter The Servant – who has rescued us and brought us into Light.
care, help, Jesus the very presence of God.

So, I want to ask one simple question -

How do we serve others – so they encounter The Servant? (Jesus)

- **Do for others**
 - **Physically – help them. Do something they can't, (rake, mow, change bulbs, shovel snow) Do something that will meet a need (meal, pick up kids, help out when some one is sick – look, observe a need and meet it together)**
Vintage Church (New Orleans) 2009. They stayed downtown on Sunday to serve during Mardi Gras – water, hurt, sick, sexual assaults as they were kicked out of rented space but a downtown church left. Now they are there
 - **Financially – help them – Do something they can't (pay a bill, buy groceries, buy a gift for another person for them) Do something that will meet a need (all of the above – write them a check, etc)**
One year – our CG bought groceries and presents for a family in our group. Did it impact that single dad and his son! He said, “I felt PRIDE – angry, I will provide. DESPAIR – I can't provide for my son. Then, thru his tears He saw: God provides based on His goodness, not ours. This is good news of Christmas: God coming to us – not because we are good. He is!
- **Listen to others**
 - **To their story – In micro pieces (what, when, where – ask questions and listen to pieces of their life. Where are you from, where did you grow up, siblings, your parents, your school, fun Christmas memories, hard memories of the holidays)**
Met the couple I mentioned earlier in our parking lot. Spent some time talking with each other and I listened to their story. I truly say this not tell you about how great I am – I am not. I tell you this to tell you how great and moving listening to stories is – it rocked me and has this whole week. When we serve, it is not only others that encounter the

Servant - WE encounter The Servant. I believe Jesus was there in our conversation because he was listening thru me and speaking to me. God serving us – absurd – humbling – amazing!

Why do we serve? When we humbly give ourselves to others we give the most vivid picture of Jesus we can give. Humility is not just gentleness or meekness. It demands vulnerability, the willingness to be hurt. It is readiness to go unnoticed, to be last, to receive the least. Humility offers nothing in the way of peace as the world gives. Yet it pictures the way of Christ and the person of Christ better than any other word or action. Because Jesus is a Servant who did all this for us – and still does. As such – when we as Christ followers serve – we bring the very person of Christ – Christ the servant King to bear on people's life and soul – and he even comes to bear on our soul!

- **Pray for others**

Ray Ortlund - says praying is the greatest thing we can do in serving others – not the only thing – just the greatest. By “Praying for others” – we are asking God to take our very natural “doing” and “listening” – and do something supernatural. We are asking God to bring his life changing light – his presence to bear on others.

Ray says – “Sometimes as Christians we have this unconscious arrogance that we can do what only God can do. That somehow our service - changes lives, souls. Jesus was serious -you can do nothing without me. But with Him -even making and giving cookies is an act of bringing Jesus to bear on others life. We invite Jesus -we don't demand. We invite him to serve through us. Prayer is this invitation and ... prayer begs and reminds us - this is God's work and God is at work long before we come and long after we are gone.”

Prayer connects us and our service to God – so we are serving with Christ – revealing Christ. Without Him – the darkness – well the darkness and brokenness of this world is just too much.

- 1) **Nothing we do in our serving can breathe the life of God, the light of God into another person.** *“that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”* This is **his salvation**; not ours, only God gives rescues.
- 2) And to be totally clear - **nothing you or I can do in service to others – can rescue us either. We don't serve FOR salvation. We don't serve For God's acceptance, to gain his favor, and or to get a place with God.** *“that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”* **End of the earth** – means we are all in need of saving.
And if it is God's salvation – we cannot save others or ourselves with our service.

So – heaven, the light had to come to us – to overwhelm the darkness. The prince of heaven, God's own Son – stepped out of heaven. He laid down eternity - and put on humanity – to come to serve us. God came to serve us. He didn't come to give us an example of how to live. He didn't come to tell us how to get to God. He didn't come to condemn us for our lives. Rather, he came to take our condemnation – so we could be with God – now! The prince of heaven – came to us – to bring us to Him.
Sometimes music has a way of saying things, words alone cannot. Listen & hear again the real story of Christmas.

Response

We don't serve **FOR** salvation, **FOR** God's acceptance, **FOR** His love or to keep His favor.
Has this been your life – serving – *when you could, when you saw a need, to help others – but also believing this was FOR your salvation, it would help your acceptance before God, or keep you in His favor?*

If so – you are trusting in your service for your salvation – for your rescue – to be right with God.
Have you ever – trusted your acceptance, your right standing before God to Jesus' service alone? He came as the Light into this dark and broken world – for yours and my broken and sinful heart.

The perfect Servant - took on our condemnation.

The perfect Servant - gave us His perfect life.

The perfect Servant - died to bring us to God because there was and is nothing we can do to make us right.

This isn't about making a better version of you in 2018 – God wants to make a new you – with Him in you!
He served us – to bring us to live with the LIGHT, in the joy and love God's very presence.

Have you ever – trusted your acceptance, your right standing before God to Jesus' service alone?

JOHN 3: 16-19 (ESV) 16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. 18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, ...19 And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.

Will you trust your soul to Jesus' service – and not yours now? Here's how ...

- I am broken – sinful – in need of rescue. *I'm not right before you. I have tried to rescue myself.*
- Jesus – I trust my soul to you – and your service to me alone. *Your life, death, and resurrection.*
- Rescue me. I believe only you can make me right before God.

Candle Lighting

Jesus entered this world – because it was full of darkness – brokenness. Our governments, our institutions, our families - are broke and in need of restoration. But it is not just the stuff of this world that is broke. Each of us are broke and in need of forgiveness and restoration – to become what we were intended to be. So Jesus came – **THE LIGHT** into our dark, broken world – to serve, to rescue us. Jesus came to serve us – to rescue us. The darkness hated this and tried everything it could to put out the light. When he was a child, he had to go to Egypt to escape. As an adult the darkness was constantly after Him – to snuff out the Light. One day darkness killed Jesus, they thought they had put out the light. ... But they did not – they could not! He was Light and darkness cannot extinguish Light – the very life and presence of God. In killing Jesus, all the darkness did was make a way for the light to be given to all in the darkness. Jesus took on our brokenness – and in so doing took our place of punishment for our sin. In doing this – he provided a way for the light to come to live in us – in our dark and broken souls. Through Jesus, God put his very **LIGHT** – his very presence in us. By his death this was accomplished – for all who believe they cannot fix their own brokenness - what separates them from God. For all who trust Christ alone can make them right with God - the Light of God – His very presence comes into us – forgives and lives in us.

In a few minutes – this whole room will be lit (word of encouragement – unlit candles lean in). And when this whole room is lit – we are a living picture of what God calls us, invites us to be. When the body of Christ allows The Servant to live through us, we become a city of light – an unquenchable – powerful light – that contains the very presence of God.

And when we serve – others encounter The Servant – who has rescued us and brought us into Light.